



Religious expressions in public schools: Are they social representations or ideology?

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ABSTRACT. A research conducted between 2010 and 2012 revealed religious expressions, such as prints, statues, graffiti, scribbling and posters, in 60.87% of the government-run high schools of the Federal District of Brazil. These religious expressions were authored by institutional agents including teachers, students, administrative personnel and school managers. The qualitative induction approach was the method used in current research, with three procedures: photos of the religious representations, interviews with managers, group discussions with students. Results show that the phenomenon is part of the structural conflict within Brazilian educational milieu, or rather, secularism versus religious education. The paper also investigates whether the phenomenon deals with ideology or social representations.

Keywords: social representation, ideology, religion, high school, public school.

Expressões religiosas em escolas públicas: representações sociais ou ideologia?

RESUMO. Pesquisa realizada entre 2010 e 2012 constatou a existência de expressões religiosas em 60,87% das escolas públicas de ensino médio do Distrito Federal, abrangendo expressões religiosas materializadas na forma de gravuras, estátuas, grafites, rabiscos e cartazes. Expressões religiosas de autoria dos atores institucionais: professores, alunos, funcionários técnico-administrativos e gestores escolares. O método utilizado na pesquisa foi o indutivo com abordagem qualitativa. Adotaram-se três procedimentos: fotografar as representações; entrevistar gestores; realizar grupo de discussão com alunos. O artigo demonstra que o fenômeno insere-se no conflito estrutural do setor educacional brasileiro: ensino religioso *versus* laicidade e discute teoricamente se o fenômeno consiste em representações sociais ou ideologia.

Palavras-chave: representações sociais, ideologia, religião, ensino médio, escola pública.

Expresiones religiosas en las escuelas públicas: ¿representaciones sociales o ideología?

RESUMEN. Esta investigación, llevada a cabo entre 2010 y 2012, constató la existencia de expresiones religiosas en 60,87% de las escuelas secundarias públicas del Distrito Federal - Brasil, abarcando expresiones religiosas materializadas en la forma de grabados, estatuas, pintadas, garabatos y carteles, y expresiones religiosas de autoría de los actores institucionales: profesores, alumnos, personal técnico y gestores escolares. El método utilizado en la investigación fue el inductivo con enfoque cualitativo. Se adoptaron tres procedimientos: fotografiar las representaciones; entrevistar a los gestores; realizar grupo de discusión con los estudiantes. El artículo demuestra que el fenómeno hace parte del conflicto estructural del sector educacional brasileño: enseñanza religiosa contra laicidad y teóricamente analiza si el fenómeno consiste en representaciones sociales o ideología.

Palabras clave: representaciones sociales, ideología, religión, enseñanza secundaria, escuela pública.

Introduction¹

The purpose of this article is to analyze the existence of religious expressions found in public high schools in the Federal District, between the years 2010 and 2012. Historical-cultural phenomenon present daily in basic education

schools, even in the 21st century. It is necessary to clarify who are their authors, in what types of languages these religious expressions are manifested and the motivation of these school actors in the production and dissemination of religious manifestations.

In this study, initially the generic terminology for expressions or manifestations is adopted to designate the various types of images, texts, graffiti, scribbles, statues and religious symbols found in public

¹ The first version of this paper was presented at the 11th International Conference on Social Representations, held at the University of Évora, Portugal, from 25 to 28 June 2012, under the title 'Religious representations in public high schools in the 21st century' (Rocha, 2012).

schools. This option will remain until it can be clarified whether they are social or ideological representations.

The theme of this article refers to the conflict religious education *versus* secular education. Structural conflict of the educational sector that appeared on Brazilian soil during the 'pombalinas' reforms², first attempt of secularism of the State, economy and education in Brazil, under the auspices of the Portuguese State in the colonial period.

Structural conflict because this duality is inherent to the organization of teaching and manifests itself through the types of institutions, the principles and the rules that comprise the educational sector. This structural conflict appears especially in moments of political law making that include cultural values and stipulate the rules for education³. If considered from the date of expulsion of the Jesuits from Portuguese soil and its colonies, in 1759, to this day, 2013, the conflict has exactly 254 years.

Over the centuries, the confessional sectors fought, and succeeded, to consolidate the obligation for religious teaching in public schools in Brazil. Such obligation, assigned to elementary school, was determined by the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, 1988 (art. 210, §1º), and by the Guidelines and Bases for National Education (9,394/1996, art. 33).

Religious education in the Brazilian educational structure: relation with administrative categorization of educational institutions and with philosophical principles

The Brazilian educational structure provides two types of educational institutions: public and private⁴. Public institutions are divided into four administrative modes: Federal; State; sectional and municipal. These schools are created, maintained and funded by the State Government, in their proper instances, which guarantee the free offer of education to Brazilian citizens and to foreigners residing in the country, as a social right (Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, 1988, art. 5 and 208). Public educational establishments of any level and course of teaching of

any State coverage are secular institutions by State principle set out in art. 19 of the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, of October 05, 1988.

Private educational institutions are divided conceptually and legally in accordance with the institutional purpose: profitable and unprofitable⁵. The categorization is self-explanatory: the lucrative business or, that is, the private⁶ ones, in the strict sense, sell a specific merchandise – teaching – with the objective of obtaining profit as a result of commercial activity. These schools usually do not profess any type of religious orientation.

The non-profit private schools, also known as non-State public schools⁷, feature three subtypes of administrative modes: denominational, philanthropic and community. Denominational institutions⁸ are educational institutions created, maintained and financed by orders, organizations or religious associations of any hue; they are religious in their structural organization. Philanthropic institutions⁹ are educational institutions created, maintained and financed by any type of organization and/or association with the goal of providing a charitable service to society. Although founded under the humanitarian ideal of giving charity to social strata that have difficulty in accessing education, they are secular institutions. Community institutions¹⁰ are created, maintained and financed by a group of people that is organized as a legal entity of private law. They are secular schools. This categorization of types of educational institutions includes the conflict religious education *versus*

⁵ See art. 213 of the Brazilian Magna Carta of 1988 and art. 77 of Brazilian LDB of 1996.

⁶ The Ministry of Education records the existence of 1,110 profitable private educational establishments in Brazil (Sistema de Regulação de Ensino Superior - e-MEC, 2013).

⁷ The auto-denomination of educational institutions as 'non-State public' occurred in the contest for legal space in political clashes of the process of preparation of the chapter on education, culture and sports of the Brazilian constitution of 1988 and in the elaboration of the Guidelines and Bases for National Education of 1996. This conceptual difference secured these educational institutions indirect access to public funds. The political process of preparing the chapter on education, culture and sports of the Federal Constitution of 1988 was thoroughly described and analyzed by Pinheiro (1989, 1991, 1996). The political process of elaborating the Guidelines and Bases for National Education was researched by Rocha (1993, 1995, 1996).

⁸ Confessional educational institutions exist in Brazil since 1534. Those with catholic guidelines were the first to be organized, as the Carmelites, Franciscans, Benedictines, Jesuits, Marists and Salesian Sisters, just to name the school networks with greater number of educational establishments. From the 19th century, Protestant groups started to establish educational institutions, such as Seventh-Day Adventists, Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists and Presbyterians. In the 20th century, new religious orientations, as spiritism (kardecists) also organized their schools.

⁹ A historical example of philanthropic and secular school network is the National Campaign of Community Schools (CNEC in Portuguese) that exists since 1943 and currently presents 134 units of basic education and 21 of higher education, acting in all educational levels and in 18 Brazilian Federation units (Campanha Nacional de Escolas da Comunidade – CNEC, 2013).

¹⁰ As examples of community education institutions, we can cite: the Foundation for Education Octavian Bastos (FEOB in Portuguese), in the State of São Paulo; the Superior Institute of Education of Serra (ISES in Portuguese), in the State of Espírito Santo; the University of Caxias do Sul (UCS) in the State of Rio Grande do Sul; And the University Vale do Rio Doce (UNIVALE), in the State of Minas Gerais. The categorization of schools can be accessed in the electronic site of the Regulatory System of Higher Education – e-MEC (2013).

² Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo [1699-1782], Count of Oeiras and Marquis of Pombal, was Prime Minister of Portugal during the reign of D. José II, from 1759 to 1779. Illuminist, he promoted various reforms in order to modernize the Portuguese society, institutions and economy (Falcon, 1982; Carvalho, 1978).

³ See historical-sociological analysis of the political-legal manifestation of this conflict in Rocha (2013).

⁴ According to art. 209 of the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, of October 05, 1988, and to art. 7º of the Guidelines and Bases for National Education (LDB in Portuguese), law nº 9.394, of December 20, 1996.

secularism in the Brazilian educational sector because the reality presents confessional and secular education institutions.

The structural conflict of the educational sector – secularism *versus* religious education – transpires also through the principles that underline Brazilian rules and pedagogical standards. These are principles that guide the activities of educational establishments; principles expressed in institutional documents, explained in philosophical-academic works, crystallized in educational legislation.

The Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, of October 05, 1988, sets out eight principles (art. 206) that should guide educational practices at any level and mode of Brazilian formal education. The principles directly related to the conflict secularism *versus* religious education are freedom and pluralism. The students' freedom to learn, the teachers' to teach, freedom of educational institutions, of the teachers and students to research, divulge their thoughts, art and knowledge (item II). This educational principle is directly correlated to the right of citizens to freely express their thoughts (art. 5, IV) and the right to citizenship of any individual to freely express their works and intellectual, artistic and scientific activities (art. 5, IX).

The principle of freedom of education is derived from the right to personal liberty, which manifests itself in various facets of citizenship: freedom to move (art. 5, XV); to access information (art. 5, XIV); to exercise any profession (art. 5, XIII); (art. 5, XVI); freedom of association (art. 5, XVII). The principle of freedom of education is the practical implementation of one of the foundations of the Brazilian republic "[...] the social values of labor and free enterprise [...]" (Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, 1988, art. 1, item IV) and establishes the free enterprise in the educational sector as constitutional device (art. 209).

Freedom is a liberal principle, defended as a right of individual citizenship since the 16th century¹¹, as

revealed by the writings of Hobbes (1993), Locke (2005), Montesquieu (2005) and Rousseau (2003). The freedom to teach and to learn is an ideological flag raised by privatists, confessional and secular liberals, as well as by publicists, since the constituent assembly of 1932-1934, that manifested itself in all the democratic constituent processes (1945-1946 and 1986-1988) for the preparation of the chapters on education of the Brazilian Republic constitution, after the revolution of 1930. The defense of freedom to teach, to learn, to research, to disseminate the scientific, artistic and pedagogical thinking in educational institutions, of teachers and students, also unified the discussions surrounding the elaboration of the first (4,024/1961) and the second (9,394/1996) Guidelines and Bases for National Education (LDB in Portuguese)¹². The educational principle of freedom is a banner common to publicists and privatists – the latter, secular and confessional – the ideological nuances of educational agents who worked in these historic moments. The principle of freedom of teaching is also defended by liberals, communists, socialists, social-democrats – the nuances of acting party in the elaboration of legislative procedures of these social documents.

The principle of freedom of teaching is also in the current Guidelines and Bases for National Education (9,394/1996, art. 3, item II) and consecrated the coexistence of public and private institutions as real expression of the freedom of citizens to choose the kind of education they desire for themselves and for their children. Institutional coexistence to be respected in the Brazilian educational structure. Institutional coexistence sacred as legal device (Guidelines and Bases for National Education, 1996, art. 3, item V; art. 7 and 77).

The principle of pluralism is also a liberal flag since the 16th century. In the educational sector, this means pluralism of institutions (public and private), plurality of methodologies, of pedagogical conceptions, plurality of theories, pluralism of teaching techniques. The principle established in the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1988 (art. 206, item III), and consolidated in the current LDB of 1996 (art. 3, item III) complements the principle of freedom, giving argumentative

¹¹ The acceptance of the principle of pluralism emerged initially in the field of ideologies in the modern western world. In fact, the acceptance of social pluralities implies in the acceptance of each other's differences. Differences that are transformed into inequalities in economic and social reality. Thus, the dyad plurality-equality is a constant relationship in the constitution of modern western citizenship. The struggle for equality over the centuries increasingly seeks to cover all population segments excluded by their differences. The principle of diversity/pluralism is therefore inherently attached to equality. The acceptance of equality as a right of all pluralisms in the reality of the material world is not yet a behavior fully assimilated in social relations. The construction of equality, citizenship and democracy gradually led to the constitution of the rights of women, children, elderly, blacks, inhabitants of the prison system, individuals with disabilities, homosexuals, transvestites and transgendered people in the western world. That is, all the real pluralities. It can be said that the concept of pluralism/diversity was specified in the concept of minorities over the centuries: "[...] the never resolved tension between spiritual power and temporal power has

allowed a more pluralistic development, conducive to the maturation of the concept of citizenship" (Demant, 2008, p. 345).

¹² There are important studies on history of education that cover the delimited subperiods, contemplating the organization of the Brazilian educational sector, the public educational policies and the procedures for the preparation of educational laws: Barros (1960), Castro (1998), Fávero (1996), Fernandes (1966), Freitag (1980), Romanelli (1991) and Saviani (1988, 1997).

arsenal to the existence of religious teaching in the formal public education in Brazil. Therefore, the conflict secularism *versus* religious education in the Brazilian educational sector is structural: structural due to its historical constitution; structural in the organization of educational institutions; structural because of the philosophical principles that guide the organization of formal education in Brazil and, at the same time, constitute arguments to social groups that advocate the existence of religious education in Brazilian public education.

Surprises in a field survey

The Brazilian legislation, constitutional and educational, determines that religious education is a compulsory curriculum component in elementary school. Mandatory for public schools to offer, though optional for students to attend. This device exists in Brazil, with variations ¹³, since the Constitution of the United States of Brazil of 1934 (art. 153); thus, there were no surprises. The surprise was finding 60.87% of public high schools of the Federal District boasting several types of religious expressions in their environment.

The surprise comes from the fact that religious education is not a curricular component of high schools in Brazil, as it is in fundamental school, according to the current legislation. Once established the material presence of religious expressions, expressed in the form of images, sentences, texts and even practices, the question that arises is about the authorship of such demonstrations inside and in the everyday life of high schools of the Federal District.

The empirical research, carried out from 2010 to 2012, encompassed 23 schools that were visited in 15 administrative regions (AR) of the Federal District: Brasília, Brazlândia, Ceilândia, Cruzeiro, Gama, Guará, Paranoá, Planaltina, Recanto das Emas, Riacho Fundo, Samambaia, Santa Maria, São Sebastião, Sobradinho and Taguatinga, a random representative sample of 48.38% of the universe of 31 administrative regions of the Federal District. The universe of public schools that offer high school education is 73 schools ¹⁴ in the entire Federal District. The 23 schools in which the survey was conducted represent 31.50% of all high schools of the Federal District. Chart 1 summarizes:

The amount of schools surveyed in each administrative region is directly correlated to the number of high school students of that administrative unit. Thus, as Ceilândia and Taguatinga are the satellite towns that present the higher number of enrollments in public high schools, three schools were surveyed. For the administrative regions that have less enrollments in high school, the statistical program raffled a smaller amount of schools, maintaining proportionality with the amount of students from every high school in each administrative region.

Chart 1. High school public schools surveyed.

Administrative Regions (satellite towns)	Schools Surveyed	Schools with Religious Expressions
Brasília (pilot plan)	02	02
Brazlândia	01	01
Ceilândia	03	02
Cruzeiro	01	----
Gama	03	02
Guará	01	01
Paranoá	01	---
Planaltina	02	02
Recanto das Emas	01	---
Riacho Fundo	01	---
Samambaia	01	---
Santa Maria	01	----
São Sebastião	01	01
Sobradinho	01	01
Taguatinga	03	02
15	23	14

Source: Data collected by the researcher/author in field research carried out in the Federal District from 2010 to 2012.

It was found, through interviews¹⁵, that the pictures and/or engravings and/or statues of saints were brought to the schools by educational subjects: administrators, teaching coordinators, teachers, technical and administrative staff. This is not to say that they produced them as art or as crafts. The banners and information posters of artisan production, through the use of these materials as a result of pedagogical-didactic activities, are also the initiative of teachers and school administrators. A few posters, produced by the use of reprographic industrial material, i.e. produced in industrial

¹³ See the variations of Brazilian legislation, constitutional and educational, about religious education, in Rocha (2013).

¹⁴ According to data provided by the State Department of Education of the Federal District (SEEDF in Portuguese) in 2010.

¹⁵ 23 interviews were conducted, one in each school surveyed, with a representative of the administrative group: principal and/or deputy principal and/or coordinator. There is no protocol of the Research Ethics Committee because: a) the research did not have any kind of institutional funding; b) it is about pedagogical activities provided by the course curriculum of Pedagogy at the University of Brasília, in which the students are enrolled in research groups of teachers; c) These activities are possible because the University has an agreement with the State Department of Education of the Federal District for conducting research, teaching (supervised) and extension activities, without the requirement that every activity must have a written consent for each project, sufficing a permission of the administration of the school unit; d) Resolution nº 196/96, version 2012, of the Research Ethics Committee establishes: "obs: the demands of social and human sciences will be included in a supplementary resolution, given their particularities."; e) Resolution nº 466/2012 was approved only in December 12, 2012, when the research was completed, because the study was presented in June 2012; f) The resolution for research in social and human sciences was approved only in April, 2016, whereas the research was performed from 2010 to 2012.

graphics, are authored by catholic groups, as a means of propaganda, to recruit young people to join the ecclesiastical career. The third group of authors are the students themselves. Graffiti with religious themes are performed by students with permission of school authorities. Some schools promote graffiti competitions among students as a way to curb the 'pichações'¹⁶ in the school. The competitions have free or induced themes, as 'Environment', 'Country Week', 'Diversity'. There was no report of induced religious-themed competitions. The graffiti of religious themes appeared through the competitions without themes or inserted in 'Diversity'. Scribbles with religious themes on the walls, doors and furniture are made by school students without permission from the school and their administrators. Chart 2 demonstrates the authorship of the types of religious expressions in public high schools of the Federal District. Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate the types of religious expressions found in the surveyed schools.

Chart 2 highlights that most religious expressions brought to the school environment are produced by institutional authorities: teachers, administrators and technical and administrative servers. Of the nine types of religious expressions found, five were produced by teachers, administrators and staff, what makes 55.55%. The students produced only two types of religious expressions found in high schools of the Federal District, which makes up to only 22.22%, while civil society organizations represent only one type of religious expression in schools, making up 11.11%. The calculations do not add up to 100% because one of the forms of language – 'pichações' – was not detected with religious motifs. Chart 2 highlights that, of all the school actors, those who are directly responsible for the educational process are mostly

the ones to produce and take religious expressions to the school environment. The production by students is the minority.

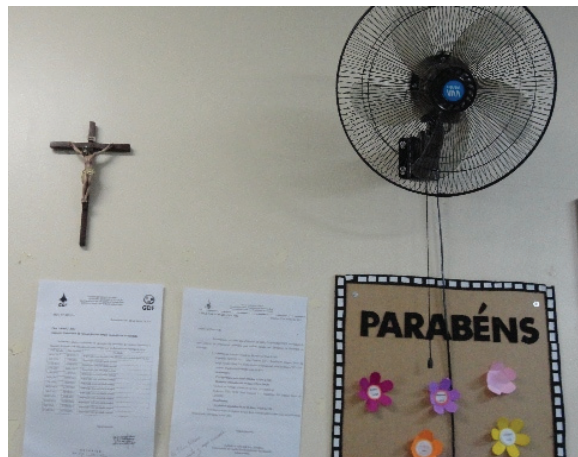


Figure 1. Picture of the Coordination Room of a public high school of the Federal District.

Source: Rocha (2011).



Figure 2. Picture of the administration room of a public high school of the Federal District.

Source: Rocha (2012).

Chart 2. Relationship between Religious Expressions and Producers¹⁶.

Types of Expressions	Authors				
	Teachers	Technical-Administrative Servers	School Administrators	Students	Civil Society Organizations
Engravings (pastiche of oil on canvas)	X	X	X	----	----
Statuses	X	X	X	----	----
Symbols	----	----	X	----	----
Handmade Posters	X	X	X	----	----
Graffiti	---	----	----	X	----
Pichações	---	----	----	----	----
Scribbles	---	----	----	X	----
Institutional Advertisements	---	----	----	----	X
Practices	X	X	X	X	----

Source: Data collected in field research performed in the Federal District from 2010 to 2012.

¹⁶ A conceptual differentiation between graffiti, 'pichações' and scribbles is adopted. The first is understood as art; the second, as manifestation of power of groups and/or young people considered marginalized by society, who express their revolt through codes understandable only between them; the third, as expressions devoided of meaning, power and artistic value (Ramos, 1994; Spinelli, 2007).

Chart 3 shows the contents of the expressions found in school spaces, produced by the direction and/or coordination and/or teachers and/or technical-administrative staff and/or religious entities of the civil society. Industrial posters of religious entities are posted by them with the agreement of the school authorities. The columns called Graffiti and Scribbles refer to expressions minted by the students on the walls, doors and desks. Religious oriented graffiti were not found¹⁷. It is important to note that the spelling presented in Chart 3 corresponds to what was found in reality, including the use of initial capitals, both in the column graffiti and the columns posters and scribbles.

As observed in Chart 3, all religious expressions found in public high schools of the Federal District are of christian character. They refer to maximum symbols of christianity: Jesus Christ, Virgin Mary, the saints, the crucifix and extracts of biblical messages. And, among the christian ones, predominate the expressions of catholic and/or protestant background. Religious expressions that resembled spiritism, also known as kardecism, were not found. Neither were found any expressions referring to religions of African, Asian or indigenous background. The hegemony of christian thought is absolute: equals 100% of religious expressions found in public high schools of the Federal District.

The phenomenon is representative: 60.87% of schools investigated had religious expressions in their dependencies. The manifestations found cannot be reduced to the amount of the categories indicated in Chart 3. Explaining: only in one school were found three images of Jesus Christ; in another, three images of Mary were found; in two others, two different types of religious writings. It is not about only one incidence in each school. There are schools that do not present any kind of religious manifestation; others have more than one type. There are still those that reproduce the same religious expression in different school environments: Secretariat, direction, patio, library, staff room. Chart 4 summarizes the relationship between the quantity and the types of religious expressions.

It was noted that the amount of images is twice the amount of schools surveyed. Chart 4 also demonstrates that there is not relationship between the amount of images and the urban-spatial location of the school. There are religious expressions in schools located in what is considered the urban center - Brasília and Guará - as well as in schools of the periphery: Ceilândia, Gama, São Sebastião, Sobradinho and even in satellite towns considered almost rural - Brazlândia and Planaltina. Figures 3 and 4 show the types of religious expressions found in the schools surveyed.

Chart 3. Types of religious expressions ¹⁷.

Engravings	Statues	Symbols	Posters	Graffiti	Scribbles	Practices
Jesus Christ	Virgin Mary	Crucifix	'Jesus makes us win'	Jesus Christ	'God'	Prayers (twice a week)
St. Francis of Assisi	---	---	'Behold, I am with you, and I will keep you wherever you go' (Gn 28:15)	Jesus loves you	'Jesus'	Reading of religious texts (twice a week)
---	---	---	'So far The Lord has helped us!' (SL 23)	---	'Jesus loves you'	---
---	---	---	'To include, it is required: God, faith (...)'	---	---	---
---	---	---	'Peace in Jesus'	---	---	---
02	01	01	06	02	03	02

Source: Data collected in field research performed in the Federal District from 2010 to 2012.

Chart 4. Relationship between Administrative Regions, Public High Schools and Religious Expressions.

Administrative Region (satellite towns)	Schools with expressions	Number of Demonstrations	Types
Brasília (Pilot Plan)	02	03	01
Brazlândia	01	03	02
Ceilândia	02	03	02
Gama	02	03	03
Guará	01	03	03
Planaltina	02	01	01
São Sebastião	01	01	01
Sobradinho	01	03	02
Taguatinga	02	06	03
	13	26	

Source: Data collected in field research performed in the Federal District from 2010 to 2012.

¹⁷ The meaning of the pichações was obtained through the application of the technique of group discussion with students. The technique was performed on one class of each school surveyed.



Figure 3. Photo of the outside of the secretariat of a public high school in the Federal District.

Source: Rocha (2010a). The face of the citizen was erased to prevent identification.

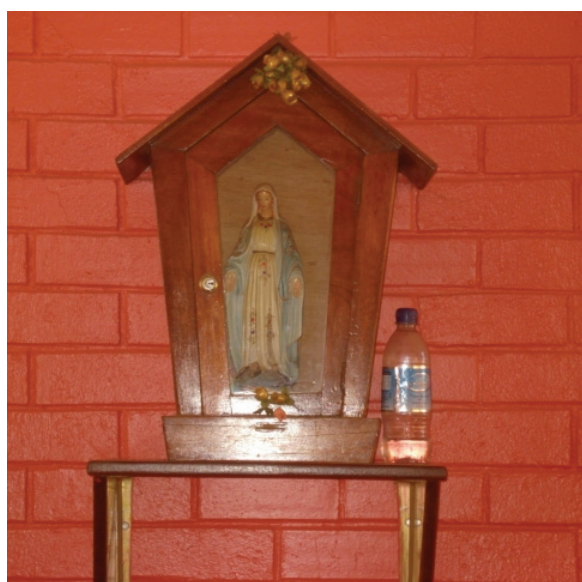


Figure 4. Detail of Figure 3.

Source: Rocha (2010b).

Taguatinga, in turn, is a large urban center, virtually independent of the pilot plan in terms of industry, commerce, hotel chain, leisure spots such as shopping malls, bars, cinemas, nightclubs, restaurants. So that other satellite towns as Ceilândia, Samambaia, Recanto das Emas, Riacho Fundo I and II gravitate around Taguatinga more than around the Pilot Plan. And with these characteristics of mid-sized urban center, Taguatinga was the Federal District administrative region where more public schools with religious expressions were found.

With respect to the only school of the sampling that demonstrated the exercise of practices of religious character in the daily life of the public high

school, it is important to note the statement of the principal:

Every Monday and Friday prayers are said for a teacher or for a student to the whole school through the speaker system, with music in the background, with reading of messages, besides congratulations for birthdays¹⁸.

Asked about the reasons for the implementation of this practice in the school environment, the teacher explained that, when he took over the direction, the school “[...] was full of drug dealers [...]” among the students and a series of actions were implemented to “[...] clean the school [...]”. The actions implemented were, according to the statement: 1.º) negotiating with the student that deal drugs so they did not perform their illegal practices inside the school and, on the other hand, the school offered its space so musical groups of which they were part could rehearse on weekends; 2.º) systematic and continuous anti-drug campaign throughout the school year; 3.º) pedagogical and psychological follow-up of female students who dealt drugs, which are the majority, since they are not searched by the school battalion. These girls, around 16 years old, are known as ‘mules’, because they carry the drugs inside their bodies; 4.º) referral of students with chemical dependency to Child Protective Services. Among these actions, the bi-weekly prayers along with reading of religious messages and the announcement of the birthdays of the week, were implemented in order to strengthen emotional ties between school subjects: teachers, students, staff and management.

It is important to note the absence of any expressions of other religions than christian. In 23 schools surveyed and in 14 schools that feature images, texts, graffiti, scribbles and religious symbols, there are no expressions which relate to buddhism, candomblé, judaism, shinto, islam, hinduism or any other religion other than christian. However, it is important to emphasize that the christian expressions found refer to the catholic and protestant branches. No religious expression regarding spiritism and/or kardecism were found.

These expressions abound in the holidays of christian origin which were characterized by the State in the form of holidays: Easter in April; *Corpus Christi* in June; day of the patroness of Brazil - Our Lady Aparecida - in October; All Souls' Day and day

¹⁸ Excerpts from an interview given by the principal of a public high school in the Federal District, on July 8, 2011.

of the gospel, both in November; and Christmas in December. In total, there are six different festivities entered in the civil calendar that public high schools also celebrate and use in an attempt to promote cohesion between the members of the school community. To celebrate these dates internally, the schools materially reproduce more religious expressions, all christians.

It is important to note that, in all schools visited, there are no religious education classes. Either there were reports of religious leaders promoting lectures in schools or any kind of religious rites promoted by religious institutions. The religious expressions found in schools are, mostly, of imagery character.

The images found may be categorized aesthetically as pastiche¹⁹, i.e., as industrial reproduction (prints) of paintings on canvas of famous works or that resemble classical styles of visual arts. Such imagistic manifestations remain in the average standard, embodying and, at the same time, reproducing the values of popular cultural tradition. Therefore, we cannot consider such imagistic expressions as works of art or craft.

It is essential to clarify that it does not exist, in this phenomenon, confusion between State *versus* church, since the initiative to bring the images and perform the practices are not from the State Department of Education, nor of clerical organizations. That is, it is not a State's initiative. The presence of religious expressions in the public high schools of the Federal District, materialized in the form of images, texts, phrases and practices, are actions performed by the subjects of the educational process on their own initiative. This means to say that they do not obey any imperative of higher hierarchical orders from State instances. They do not obey them because there are no directions from the State in this sense. Neither religious communities exert any kind of pressure in that sense. The few industrial posters from religious institutions were a form of disclosure, in order to attract the attention of young people to the ecclesiastical career²⁰. Similar propaganda posters were found, inviting young people to military career; posters sponsored by the Armed Forces of Brazil.

The religious expressions found in public high schools of the Federal District are, thus, actions of their students, teachers, staff and administrators.

The school community embodies these religious manifestations obeying, only and exclusively, subjective moral-ideological imperatives.

This last statement is the result of empirical observation of the process of individualization of values, beliefs and principles. However, it is not unknown that both morality and ideology are collective constructions and specific to a beleaguered society in a given historical temporality. Social constructs are internalized in individuals through social processes, where education, in particular formal education, consolidates convictions on values and principles, leading to some standardization of social behaviors:

At school are developed all sorts of intellectual activity, under an embryonic form. Thus, within school we find the means of placing the children in a collective life different of domesticity; we can encourage habits that, once acquired, will survive the school term and will bring due satisfaction. Therefore, school life is a defining moment, unique, irreplaceable, in which we can form the children [...] (Durkheim, 2008, p. 229-230).

Social Representations or Ideology?

Established the existence, the authorship, the types and incidences of religious expressions in public high schools of the Federal District, it is essential to understand the meaning of them in contemporary times. The analysis will try to distinguish whether they are social representations or ideology.

Social representations²¹ can be defined as a social phenomenon that spans the whole of a society. It is formed by the set of universal society categories. These, in turn, are categorical propositions that give meaning to group and individual existing. They are categorical and attach meaning to reality because the attribute of truth is inherent to them. Social representations are therefore universal, and explain the subject, the world, the life, the otherness, the object. Universal propositions are time, space,

¹⁹ Pastiche is a work intended to be artistic, although it constitutes the reproduction of a consecrated style and, thus, without originality and uniqueness (Houaiss, Vilar & Franco, 2001).

²⁰ The posters of religious groups found in the schools are all of catholic orders and invite the students "not" only to religious practice, but promote regimentation campaigns for their ecclesiastical frames.

²¹ Social Psychology establishes a differentiation between collective and social representations. It argues that Durkheim coined the term collective representations and that the concept of social representations was created by Moscovici. In order to legitimize its arguments, it advocates the thesis that Durkheim studied collective representations in primitive societies and that the phenomenon of social representations is typical of modern societies, as conceived by Moscovici (2012) in *Psychoanalysis: its image and its public*. This is a false scientific dilemma; first because there is no social without the collective. The collective is social. Then, it is a universal and timeless phenomenon that introduces a logic unique to each society. What is differentiated in time and space is the type of rationality each society creates. Moreover, Durkheim used both expressions in the work that introduced the concept to the western scientific world: *The elementary forms of religious life* (1989) and also in the work *Sociology and Philosophy* (1994). This work uses the concept of social representations within the durkheimian meaning, whereas there is no differentiation between collective and social representations, although it also uses contributions from Moscovici (2003) and other contemporary thinkers, followers of Moscovici, on how the social representations operate.

gender, divine design, dichotomy between sacred and profane, notions of similarity and difference, meanings of regularity and totality, sense of causality and of hierarchy. These categories “[...] express the fundamental conditions of understanding among the spirits²² [...]” (Durkheim, 1989, p. 518).

Ideology can be conceived as the systematic, standardized system of thought, exerting a coercive force on the human being and, therefore, producing uniformity in social thinking, which causes false consciousness of reality in men. Ideology is a system of thought that creates cohesion between individuals of a social group because it makes them believe in the same values. Values such as equality, freedom, justice, inequality, injustice, for example. This system of thought explains the reality and, to explain it, naturalizes social inequalities, falsifying them (Chauí, 1984). Ideology camouflages the mechanisms of power and class privileges of social reality:

Standards, antiquated and inapplicable lines of thought and theories tend to degenerate into ideologies, whose function is to hide the real meaning of conduct, instead of revealing it (Mannheim, 1972, p. 121).

Social representations do not conceal reality, on the contrary, they explain it; give the human being a meaning for reality.

The difference is, therefore, abyssal: social representations are the set of universal categories of a society that allows men to accomplish the mental operation of placing new phenomena in a conceptual scheme, which allows their understanding. Social representations constitute the matrix of human thought: “[...] fundamental notions of spirit, the essential categories of thought [...]” (Durkheim, 1989, p. 190). Social representations exist in any culture at any time and society. The representation gives the world logic, organize it, explain it, rationalizes it. On the other hand, ideology is the set of values and beliefs that gives men a misleading explanation of reality. Misleading because it sidesteps the inequalities and social differences, naturalizing them. This apparent concealment of reality is possible because ideologies are produced in social contexts cracked by antagonistic social classes. The need of a particular class to legitimize and perpetuate its social standing leads to the creation of an ideology. This system of

thought is created to justify the position that a certain class occupies in society and its access to social benefits that other groups do not have. Therefore, ideology naturalizes the position of groups in society and the privileges that some have access to and others do not.

Although Marx and Engels (2007) have referred to ideology as a system of representations, it is necessary to consider they were in the heart of the 19th century system of thought, which considered the world as representation (Schopenhauer, 2005). The focus at that time was to prove that human thought had material bases:

Men are the producers of their representations, ideas and so on, but only real and active men, as they are conditioned through a given development of their production forces [...] (Marx & Engels, 2007, p. 48).

Considering this dichotomy - social representations *versus* ideology - it is necessary to analyze if the phenomena investigated in public high schools of the Federal District are ideological manifestations or expressions of social representations. The theoretical-scientific dilemma presented has reason to exist since both concepts are based in epistemological assumptions of social roots of thinking, because both

[...] point to the need of starting from social relations to comprehend how and why men act and think in a given way, affirming the historical character of conscience (Sawaia, 2004, p. 75).

Therefore, it is not only about uniting concepts of different theoretical lines - social representations *versus* ideology or public *versus* private or masculine *versus* feminine, for example - they express the existence of a conceptual duality that is beneath the conflict underlying the representations between the new and the familiar, because the cognitive-social-communicational operation of creating explanatory categories of reality is a work of systematization of rational thought that only can be elaborated from the subject-other-object interrelations in public space:

In all forms of representation, there is a battle between the history of the object and the intention to seize it, repeatedly, entangling what was already in a completely new network of signification (Jovchelovitch, 2008, p. 189).

This battle is the cognitive-inter-relational struggle of the subjects to know the object, which is new in their sphere of social relations and their cognition. The knowledge of otherness begins by establishing the similarities and differences with

²² The term 'spirits' used by Durkheim (1989) do not have metaphysic meanings. The word 'spirit' was often employed in the 18th and 19th centuries referring to mentalities, denoting the prevailing notions of a group of individuals, of a given time or society.

other objects of the subject's domain. The comparison positions the new object in categories that are not neutral at all:

[...] when we 'categorize' something, we seek one among the prototypes we have stored in our memory (individual and/or collective) and establish a positive or negative relation with it (Leme, 2004, p.49, highlighted by the authors).

The religious expressions found in public high schools of the Federal District are related to a judeo-christian matrix. In this universe, religions are systems of thoughts with organicity and standardization. They consist of dogmas that guide the doing, thinking and feeling of individuals from dichotomous categories of right and wrong, good and evil, of gods and their antithesis, sacred and profane. They are hardened systems of thought, which perpetuate in time and are not inclined to changes. Durkheim (1989, p. 79) defines them as

[...] a supportive system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, i.e. , separated, prohibited; beliefs and practices which unite in the same moral community, called church, all that adhere to it.

Weber (1991) explains them a system of symbolic representations, while Marx (2010) expresses them as the opium of the people, since it dulls the mentalities.

Religions are systems of universal thought. They exist in any society, in any historical temporality. All civilizations have produced some kind of divine conception as an explanatory form of reality (Damião, 2006). The emergence of religions is not related to societies fractured in classes. Communal societies²³ also produced some kind of godly thought. The belief in this kind of explanation produces feelings, thoughts and behaviors common among members of the same society. It is likely that this has been one of the first types of representation created by humans: "All known religions were, in one way or another, systems of ideas tending to encompass the universality of things and to give us a full representation of the world" (Durkheim, 1989, p. 185).

Based on the classics, it is deduced that religions are systems of thought grounded in social representations, but are not the representations themselves, because these are the set of conceptual elaborations that founds the rationality of a social group:

Moreover, since the logical thinking begins with the concept that it has always existed; there was no

historical period in which men would have lived, so intensely, in confusion and contradiction (Durkheim, 1989, p. 518).

However, we must consider that social phenomena are endowed with a much greater complexity than the world of nature, being, in fact, representative and symbolic. The fact that a social phenomenon could be included in a category does not mean that this categorization incase its meaning, essence, complexity and specificity.

History shows that societies with structural division of classes produced organized religious systems, with hierarchical institutions, symbolism, ritual and a theology that performs a sophisticated social function: explaining the reality to men by means of religious myths; making them believe in basic and common values and principles; controlling the everyday behavior of men through the notions of divine sin and/or rage and/or will; justifying the privileges of institutional religious actors. In the words of Weber (1991, p. 297):

The ethical requirements to gods increase [...] with the increasing regulation of innovative types of human relationships through conventional rules and the increasing importance of mutual dependence of men in relation to the observance of these rules [...].

The religious systems of hebrew antiquity, India, medieval Europe, and even those of the greco-roman world, have these idiosyncrasies in common.

Sociological studies clarify that religious systems in class societies constitute an ideological coercive force on the social environment, with the primary function of social control: "The interest of the privileged in conserving the existing religion as a means of domestication [...]" (Weber, 1991, p. 350). Religions exert their coercive power over society through theology with their rituals and symbolism. By constructing explanatory myths, they justify the inequalities, the differences, the privileges. This symbolic justification camouflages the unequal reality and neutralizes the differences through deification. Religious systems of societies that split into antagonistic classes are, thus, ideologies. The symbolic myths, the theologies created by religions, in turn, are based on the categories of time, space, gender, similarity, difference, hierarchy, authority, regularity, and causality, i.e. the social representations that explain the existence of the world, of life, of reality. These categories give meaning to the world, to the being, to the object, to the other in the relational space in which they are inserted, and shape the look of men over their surroundings. Through not only rituals and

²³ In the Marxist connotation, communal societies are those where there are no social classes or private and State properties (Marx, 2011).

symbolologies religions coerce men, but also because they underline in their explaining *corpus* the founding categories of human thinking.

Remains the guiding theme of the article: are religious expressions, found in the public schools of Federal District during the period from 2010 to 2012, in the form of images, texts, graffiti, scribbles and statues, social representations or ideology? The need for conceptual precision, in every social and/or institutional ambience surveyed, is essential because "The words and the very general concepts - when the extension predominates over the understanding - are easily claimed and manipulated" (Starobinski, 2002, p. 60). They are expressions that contain social representations and are, at the same time, ideology, because they underlie both concepts the epistemological axiom that

[...] objective reality is not an *a priori* over men as somethings understood by faithful description; it is the product of objectivities of subjectivity, being the subjectivity a product of the subjectivities of objectivity (Sawaia, 2004, p. 75).

The religious expressions in public high schools of the Federal District, in the 21st century, are social representations because they are not individual, on the contrary, they are manifestations of collective constructions established for millennia that assumed a natural appearance because they were established in the social space and have proliferated in historical time. They are expressions that reproduce the mythology of the divine incarnated in a man - Jesus Christ - and, therefore, superior to the human species. The hierarchy and the authority in the relationship between the divine and the human are beneath the religion expression.

Another category of social representations, the notion of causality, is clearly expressed in the speech of the principals interviewed²⁴, when they explain the use of religious practices in schools to troubleshoot conflicts, violence and even drug trafficking within the school. That is, one of the possibilities for the conflicts in school would be the absence or weakness of values and principles that lead to respect life and each other. Among them, the understanding of the existence of a divine being that appease all conflicts in the minds, and the emotional actions of humans - in spirit, as defined in the 19th century.

Gender is another category of social representations present in these religious expressions that perpetuates the identification of the divine with the male gender, and thus contributes to reproduce the social representation of the feminine as subaltern, for being human. The relationship between the divine and the human with the gender positions men as superior and therefore dominant; and women as inferior, immediately subaltern, in social relations.

The concepts of similarities and differences are also included in the religious expressions that consolidate the similar (christian) and the different (non-christian). Thus, the notions of divine, human, male, female, hierarchy, authority, similar and different are rooted as natural in the mentalities of the students in the processes of cognitive, emotional and personality formation.

However, they are also ideology because, in this case, they are expressions of a specific system of thought: christianity. They are manifestations of belief based on a theology situated historically in its symbols and myths: the belief in a single god; the belief in the incarnation of his only son - Jesus Christ; the appreciation of the sacrifice of this avatar, symbolized by the cross; the faith in the capacity of this 'loving god' to solve the problems that turn schools in environments where is difficult to coexist; hope in the material intervention of metaphysical entities (saints). The various types of images, texts, graffiti, scribbles, statues and religious symbols found in public high schools of the Federal District are expressions of a specific ideology that consolidated a tradition strong enough to:

[...] a) symbolize social cohesion or conditions for acceptance of a group or real communities [...]; b) [...] legitimate institutions, *status* or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose is socialization, the rooting of ideas, values and patterns of behavior (Hobsbawm, 1997, p. 17).

Therefore, in this particular case, the religious expressions in public schools demonstrate the founding categories of social representations and are ideologies. The crucial difference in this study consists of the character of invisibility and naturalization²⁵ inherent to the phenomenon of social representations. These two specificities do not characterize the ideologies that are, on the contrary,

²⁴ The coordinators interviewed reported as main problems in school coexistence: trafficking of narcotics in the locations of, and even inside, the school; physical and symbolic violence between students, between teachers and students and between students and staff; contempt at common rules; disrespect towards the institution, the collective and the institutional authorities; apathy and lack of interest, on the part of the students, in the educational process, the community activities and in life itself.

²⁵ The founding categories of human thinking that constitute social representations - the notions of time, space, gender, similarity, difference, hierarchy, authority, regularity, totality and causality - are considered natural by the common sense. It does not theorize, reflect or philosophize on them; on the contrary, employs them every day. This naturalization causes their invisibility, since they do not constitute an object of problematization. It is necessary to clarify that social representations constitute consensient phenomena. Naturalization and invisibility do not make them unconscious.

very visible through the institutions, the rituals and the symbolism because it is necessary to gain legitimacy through the invention of traditions: “[...] many political institutions, ideological movements and groups [...] made necessary the invention of a historical continuity [...]” (Hobsbawm, 1997, p. 15). Due to these two specificities - invisibility and naturalization - the cultural processes of operation of social representations are highlighted. Hence, from now on, the article will emphasize the character of social representation contained in the observed phenomenon.

Social Representations and Everyday Life

Clarified the phenomenon, it is necessary to explain the naturalization of the use of these images and symbols in the school environment and their invisibility to other social actors who attend school, as parents, police officers, security guards, other professionals, visitors.

The contemporary men, in their everyday life, are surrounded by social representations, guide their actions, understand reality through them, but do not acknowledge their existence. In the contemporary world of megacities, we are surrounded by material manifestations of social representations: every light of large urban centers, every billboard in cities, every image of magazines, television, movies, every graffiti, every ‘pichações’ on the walls of streets come loaded with social representations.

The naturalization of the process of understanding and explaining reality, coupled with the abundance of the various forms of expression of representations, make them natural, so the human being does not think about them, even though their actions are conducted by the representations on a daily basis:

[...] what rules is not the few ideas that occupy our attention in the present moment, but on the contrary, the residues left by our previous life: the customs, the various prejudices, different trends that move us, all of them acting without our realization, that is, in a word, everything that constitutes our character (Durkheim, 1994, p. 16).

The naturalization of conceptions, beliefs and ideas makes certain phenomena invisible to the eyes of the common men because social representations position objects, people and events in certain mental categories, previously created by the existing value system. Categories that are shared by the society. Thus, when the common men is faced with a new object, an event that does not follow the usual standards, or a strange person, cognition uses the

mental patterns available to accommodate that object, that fact and/or that person in the pre-existing value categories in order to understand and explain them. These are the categories that require the selection of what is important and what is irrelevant; what is visible, because is strange, and what is invisible, because is common. The representations put things in a context that makes it possible to understand, explain and accept them.

The naturalization of the universal categories that give meaning to reality, to the world, to life and beliefs is achieved through four cognitive operations: naming; classification; objectification and anchoring. The naming occurs at the first contact with the otherness²⁶. The vision of the other, the contact, the interaction, cause sensations. In order to understand them, one seeks similarities and differences with already known otherness. From the similarities and/or differences that stand out by external aspects of otherness, a name is given: “[...] naming is not a purely intellectual operation [...]. It is an operation related to a social attitude” (Moscovici, 2007, p. 68).

Classification is the mental operation that accommodates the other in a specific category:

Categorizing someone or something means choosing one of the paradigms stocked in our memory and establishing a positive or negative relationship with it (Moscovici, 2007, p. 63).

How do we classify, in the everyday life, in such an imperceptible way to the common sense? We classify by comparing the new to a prototype that exists in our conceptual baggage: the most obvious characters of the new are framed within some of the characters of the pre-existing paradigm in our conceptual baggage. It is a rational operation, but at the same time, it is not so purely rational. It is a social attitude from codes already introjected in the mentality.

After the naming and the classification, there is the generalization when the otherness is no longer new and becomes part of the conceptual universe established. It is no longer considered a strange phenomenon precisely because it was named and classified. With the generalization, the sensory, cognitive and emotional distances between the new and the known are reduced. While the particularization of the new is not confounded with the conceptual mass that gives meaning to reality,

²⁶ The otherness, the other, might be a human being, a natural phenomenon, another type of living being, an object, a social group, an event, or even an entire society, depending on the process in which it is inserted.

"[...] we keep our distance and continue to analyze the object, as something divergent from the prototype" (Moscovici, 2007, p. 65). The generalization happens when the new, the strange, the different, lose their specificity. Only in this way they can be assimilated as known, as common, as normal.

When the three mental operations complement each other, otherness and its specificities consolidate in the mentalities. They anchor deep in the collective memory and are individually manifested:

This is a process that transforms something strange and disturbing, that intrigues us in our particular system of categories, and compares it with a paradigm of a category that we think is appropriate (Moscovici, 2007, p. 61).

This means that the new, the strange, the different, was objectified, lost its aura of strangeness, unusualness, novelty, and merged to the mass of things known, understood, explainable and accepted in the cognition and mentality of the social group.

Common sense has no way to confront the social representations, because it does not even have knowledge of its existence. It considers its individual way of thinking, its beliefs as its own, its ideas as unique and its values as private. The social representations are invisible, as much as they make certain phenomena invisible, so they are unquestionable. Social representations constitute "[...] a social reality sui generis. The more its origin is forgotten and its conventional nature is ignored, more fossilized it becomes" (Moscovici, 2007, p. 41). That is why school actors do not question the existence of religious expressions in public high schools. They do not question because they do not perceive them. They look at them, but do not see them. The school actors do not get surprised with the religious expressions on the walls and furniture of the schools because they are so familiar that become invisible. The images and religious sentences inscribed inside the schools are not a problem to parents, teachers, students, administrators, staff and even visitors. They are not something strange, uncommon, different, unknown. On the contrary, they are rooted in the categories of the familiar, known, common.

Due to this naturalization, people move in and out of schools without paying attention to the representations expressed on the walls, in murals, doors, windows. They read the information, see the image, but not pay attention to the representation. They go in and out the schools every day and do not

realize the representations that these establishments expose on their walls and furnishings. This naturalization causes people not to see the religious images expressed in public schools. And, if they see them, they consider them natural, because they are a reference of their mentality, which confers sense to the world. Students, parents, teachers, technicians, school battalion officers, visitors of all kinds, go in and out the public high schools of the Federal District and do not see the statues of saints, the paintings with images of Jesus Christ, the graffiti with the name of god, the scribbles of 'Jesus loves you '. And if they notice them²⁷, they do not question them and are not surprised because they consider them familiar.

The representations give sense to reality, and thus guide human actions. They guide them for being inside the human being, for constituting their mentality. They are shared by those who walk together the same routine, divide the same space, inhabit the same temporality. This is why "[...] the representations structure the real the same way they express it, and it would be useless to oppose to those, equally real" (Perrot, 1996, p. 91).

Final considerations

Field research has proven the existence of religious representations in 60.87% of the public high schools visited in the Federal District. Representations expressed in the form of images, sentences, texts and practices. It is important to highlight that the representations found within public high schools in the Federal District are all Christians. Empirical research has proven that the legislation is different from the practice.

However, this phenomenon cannot be reduced to a simple dichotomy legislation *versus* pedagogical practice. Incurring in the speech that the pedagogical agents cannot perform such actions would reproduce sameness. To paraphrase Caetano Veloso (1981)²⁸, we try to see in another way to elaborate other words.

The representations are reproduced and/or created by subjects of education: teachers, students, staff and even technical-administrative staff. Representations reproduced and/or created in a level of education that does not present religious teaching

²⁷ The possibility of realization of these images and religious expressions and their meanings, on the part of the school actors, was the subject of debate in the discussion groups with students and of inquiry in interviews with school administrators.

²⁸ Caetano Veloso, Brazilian singer and composer, released the song *Outras Palavras* in the album (*Long Play*) with the same title in 1981.

in the curriculum. Representations reproduced and/or created by the subjects of education on their own initiative, without meeting any institutional demands of public administrators.

These individuals - teachers, students, principals, coordinators, staff - who experience daily school life, believe their actions of creating and/or reproducing the images, sentences, texts of christian ideals, are individual motivations and completely natural. They resort to these representations in the pursuit of efficiency and effectiveness in teaching, in particular with regard to human relationships: as a means to encourage students; as a criterion for conflict resolution; as a way to help those who face emotional and family problems. These individuals share the same representations and, because of it, conceive them as natural. This naturalization causes them to resort to the representations in the everyday life as a source of explanation of reality; thus, they do not find it strange to reproduce them in public schools, secularized by legislation.

Sharing the same representation does not mean that all profess the same religion. It means they understand the reality by the same interpretive categories: the existence of beings immaterial and superior to humans; the duality between the profane and the sacred spheres of life; the meanings of authority - in this case, the deity - and hierarchy (the relationship between the divine and the human is a hierarchical relationship); the notions of similarities and differences. These aspects explain the relationship between the divine and the human, give meaning to the relationship between humans and position non-human towards humans. Sharing the same representations means that these institutional actors - students, teachers, administrators, staff, parents - relate the existence of the space and time they live as divine creations. It means they comprehend their own existence, their condition of gender, the manifestations of causality, regularity and totality of aspects in their lives as creations that are not their own, but of a being superior to all and everyone. It is essential to remember that it is possible to establish that conclusion because it is about the religious expressions that school actors use naturally in their everyday pedagogical practices. And those who perhaps, in the school environment, do not share these divine-based conceptions, do not say anything and/or do not antagonize the actions of those who create them. So much that the research did not detect the existence of conflicts because the

use of religious expressions within the schools investigated.

The fact that the subjects of education reproduce these representations by their own initiative, in their professional and educational practices, proves that the assimilation of christian ideas was successfully completed, under the scope of the ideology. Christian values and principles are the foundation of their practices because they constitute the basis of their mentalities. If not of everyone, at least of the majority, so much that they are accepted without questioning by the subjects of the school community, since the research asked about the existence of contestation on these facts and found negative answers, both in the discussion groups and the interviews. The research did not detect conflicts in these schools, motivated by exposure of these religious representations. The express representation seems to be regarded as 'natural', to the point of not being noticed by inspection agents, by visitors, and even by other researchers. This invisibility means that the representation became natural, the coercion ceased to be external and became internal, being embodied in the individual mentality: "[...] by being incarnated in individuals, collective ideals tend to be individualized" (Durkheim, 1989, p. 501).

The research proved that the representations of world, men, society, that christian ideals defend, are embodied in individuals with such depth that they cannot part from these values and principles, taking them to the professional environment, to school, to the pedagogical practice. Christian representations of world are deeply rooted in the mentality of education professionals of high schools in the Federal District, so much that they fix them in the form of christian images, texts, sentences and practices. The processes²⁹ of objectivation and anchoring are complete because social representations are internalized in individual mentalities. Once assimilate by the subjectivities, the representations are loaded with "[...] such force that, automatically, encourage or inhibit the acts [...]" (Durkheim, 2007, p. 261). Thus, they are reproduced in public high schools so naturally.

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²⁹ Anchoring and objectification are two concepts created by Moscovici (2003) to explain how the representations are internalized by the individuals. Anchoring is the process "[...] that transforms something strange and disturbing, which intrigues us, in our particular system of categories [...]" (Moscovici, 2007, p. 61). Objectification is the process that transforms something abstract into concrete, an unreal and/or non-existent being into something real and existing. The concept of god is the best example of objectification.

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